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FOR S/GWI AND NEA/MAG

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [TRSY](#) [TS](#)

SUBJECT: TUNISIA: S/GWI PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR WOMEN'S BUSINESS
INCUBATOR CENTER

REF: 09 STATE 132094

11. Summary: The Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises (CNFCE) proposes to launch an innovative program that aims to accelerate women's socio-economic progress in Tunisia by improving opportunities for business development, promoting sustainable job creation, and expanding economic opportunities through the creation of a Women's Business Incubator Center in Tunis. The program will target young female graduates and aspiring female entrepreneurs and help them to transform business ideas into new start-ups, create jobs, and develop profitable enterprises. End summary.

12. Problem Statement: Finding a job is a priority for female university graduates in Tunisia. To respond to that need, the Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises (CNFCE) works to help women graduates gain marketable skills and prepares them to transform their ideas into business start-ups.

13. Project description: The CNFCE has a long history of working with women entrepreneurs in Tunisia to provide training, networking, information-sharing, and increased access to new markets. CNFCE would like to take this work to the next level by creating what it terms a "Women's Business Incubator Center" in Tunis, which would be a "one-stop shop" for the needs of aspiring Tunisian women entrepreneurs. The Incubation Center would provide its participants with business development training, resources, infrastructure, and consulting services to develop and grow their businesses through partnerships with existing networks, including access to business-to-business opportunities. The CNFCE has already identified two potential local partners to support the development of the Incubator Center. The National University will recruit appropriate students to develop a Business Management Essentials training program. The Technological Park of Borj Cedria would house and manage the Center and provide technological know-how, facilities, business connections, and media exposure.

14. Project Activities: This proposal will cover 18 months, including program planning and start-up, opening the Incubator Center, and mentoring the first cohort of graduates through the first phase of business start-up.

Phase One: The first phase of this program will last six months and will focus on identifying and convening potential program partners in a public-private coalition to support the Center, identifying and training a project manager, implementing a feasibility study, and developing the strategic and financial plans for the Center. The CNFCE will hire a project manager with experience in community incubators and management in addition to support staff responsible for designing methodology, training support staff, implementing the feasibility study, and coordinating the program implementation with the coalition partners.

Acceptance into the program will be through competition. The partner university will call for business proposals with special preference for recent graduates. The CNFCE and the university will conduct an informational exchange exercise to help aspiring female entrepreneurs identify their resources, attributes and aptitude for the entrepreneurial process, evaluate their strengths and

weaknesses, set goals for what their business might accomplish in three to five years, construct a preliminary strategy to achieve their objective(s), and begin the next steps toward starting the business. Through an internal evaluation, proposals will then be selected and entered into a two-year incubation process in which the small start-ups are offered services ranging from office space, telecommunication to administrative support. Additionally young entrepreneurs will receive start-up capital, mentorships, training and marketing assistance.

Phase 2: The CNFCE and its partners will adapt business development methodologies to develop an intensive training program for participants to give guidance on business plan development, marketing strategy, personal selling skills, and CEO training. A Business Management Essentials training program will be developed and implemented for the Incubator Center by the university. Business Management Essentials is a practical, skills-based education program designed to strengthen and sharpen the management skills of business owners and professionals.

The Women's Incubator Center will also provide participants with a mentor to assist with the "how to" aspects for the next steps in business growth and career development. By leveraging the vast expertise already existing in the CNFCE network, this program will enable young entrepreneurs to engage in a sustainable, skills-building mentoring program that improves business and maintains a connection to the youth entrepreneurship movement by providing them the opportunity to share and learn from the experience of more experienced entrepreneurs.

Phase 3: The Women's Business Incubator Center will also help client companies secure capital by managing an internal "seed fund" and access to private sources in addition to conventional forms of debt and equity financing, and help participants apply for loans.

The CNFCE estimates that participants will spend two years in the Incubator Center before graduating. The program will set graduation requirements by developing benchmarks such as company revenues or staffing levels, rather than time in the program. Successful completion of the program will increase the likelihood that a female entrepreneur will stay in business over the long term.

The CNFCE views this proposal as a source of funds for developing a pilot Women's Business Incubator Center, but once the program is operational it will become self-sustaining. The CNFCE and its advisory board will undertake the strategic and financial development of this program with this goal in mind, and will explore sustainability options such as fee-based services, client equity shares, and private sector partnerships and financing.

15. Outcomes and Performance Measures

Goal: Improve entrepreneurial opportunities for women through business development; accelerate sustainable job creation for women; and expand economic opportunities for women by creating a women's business incubator center in Tunisia.

Indicators: Number of businesses started by participants that are generating profit; number of graduate firms still in business or that have been merged or acquired; a 200 percent increase in the number of people employed by participants; increased rate in business revenue as a result of program participation.

Performance Measures: Baseline survey; final survey; quarterly reports; and final report.

Objective 1: Provide young potential entrepreneurs the opportunity to independently establish successful businesses through a series of specialized capacity-building training courses and business simulations.

Indicators: Number of young female entrepreneurs participating in program; number of new businesses started by participants; increased entrepreneurial capacity of participants; number of participants completing the Business Management Essentials program.

Performance Measures: Baseline survey; final survey; training reports; quarterly reports; and final report; improvement in score

of capacity assessment.

Objective 2: Enable young entrepreneurs to engage in a sustainable skills-building mentoring program that improves business and maintains a connection to the youth entrepreneurship movement and integrate them into both the CNFCE and Middle East/North Africa Business Women's Network to develop partnerships with existing networks and gain access to business-to-business opportunities.

Indicators: Number of mentors and mentees involved in on-going mentoring relationships; rate of participants reporting an increase in their professional capacity as a result of the mentoring program; rate of participants that have established business-to-business

opportunities.

Performance Measures: Baseline survey; final survey; quarterly reports; final report; and mentoring evaluations.

Objective 3: Create a business incubator center through a public-private partnership coalition that provides its participants with business development opportunities, resources, infrastructure, and consulting services to start-up and grow their businesses.

Performance Indicators: Number of companies the incubator serves; number of graduates since the Center's launch; and amount of debt capital raised each year by client and graduate firms (bank loans, loans from family and friends, revolving loan funds, or other loan sources).

Performance Measures: Baseline survey; final survey; quarterly reports; and final report.

Performance period: 18 months.

16. Budget

Total: \$96,000 broken down as follows:

Phase 1: Six months, \$8,000

Identifying and convening potential program partners; training a project manager; implementing the feasibility study, and developing the strategic and financial plans for the Center.

Phase 2: Ten months, \$82,000

Develop an intensive training program for participants; strengthen management skills of business owners and professionals through internships; English classes in partnership with

Pearson/Financial Times; availability of a mentor to assist with business growth and career development; secure capital by managing an internal "seed fund" and access to private placements; assist participants to apply for loans.

Phase 3: Two months, \$6,000

Availability of a mentor to assist with business growth and career development; secure capital by managing an internal "seed fund" and access to private placements; assist participants to apply for loans.

17. Description of Recipient

The Chambre Nationale des Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises (CNFCE), a non-governmental and non-profit organization, was created in 1990 to promote the economic and social role of women entrepreneurs in Tunisia.

CNFCE is composed of women entrepreneurs in different sectors of the economy: industry, trade, handicrafts, and technology. CNFCE is the Tunisian hub and a founding member of the Middle East/North Africa Business Women's Network (BWN), one of the oldest businesswomen's associations in the region. CNFCE is an established organization with numerous existing partnerships and memberships in various regional business networks. The organization has grown from its original 20 founding members to over 500 current active members. Part of their success hinges on an active event portfolio, with activities ranging from monthly member breakfasts to participation in regional forums and overseas study tours, and their continued

expansion throughout the country by building the capacity of their regional chapters.

18. Monitoring

Embassy Tunis will monitor the grant. Reports will be submitted by the grantee on a quarterly basis. A mid-term study of performance and financial status will be conducted at the 9-month mark.

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